

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01949 280803Z
ACTION NEA-10

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AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1949

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR LE
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON AND NORTH: CONVERSATION WITH DANY CHAMOUN

1. DANY CHAMOUN, PNL MILITARY LEADER, LUNCHEd AT
THE RESIDENCE AT YARZE APRIL 24. DATT AND DCM ALSO
PRESENT. FOLLOWING POINTS WERE DISCUSSED.

A. PALESTINIANS. CHAMOUN SAID PALESTINIANS MUST
UNILATERALLY GIVE UP THEIR WEAPONS AND RETURN TO
THEIR CAMPS. HE SAW NO REASON WHY LEBANESE SHOULD
GIVE UP THEIR ARMS. THIS WAS THEIR COUNTRY. WHEN
AMBASSADOR SAID PALESTINIANS HAD LEGITIMATE FEAR OF
BEING MASSACRED IF THEY ALONE GAVE UP WEAPONS, HE
SAID CHRISTIANS DID NOT WANT TO KILL PALESTINIANS.
THEY HAD MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO DO SO EVERY DAY
BUT DID NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THEM. WHILE THIS
CONVERSATION WAS TAKING PLACE, A LARGE BATTLE
BETWEEN SYRIAN ARMY AND PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS
WAS TAKING PLACE IN FULL VIEW FROM THE RESIDENCE
TERRACE. DANY WAS PLEASED WITH THE
PROGRESS WHICH SYRIAN ATTACK WAS MAKING AND SAID
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 01949 280803Z

HE HOPED THEY WOULD CONTINUE THE ATTACK INTO THE CAMPS.

B. SOUTH LEBANON. DANY SAID ATTACK ON TAIBEH
LAST MONTH WAS A MISTAKE. KAMAL AL ASSAD HAD
ASKED FOR IT AND HAD INITIALLY THROWN SHIA SUPPORT
BEHIND SEIZURE OF HIS HOME TOWN, BUT THEN WITHDREW
IT UNDER PRESSURE, CAUSING CHRISTIAN CAMPAIGN TO

COLLAPSE. DANY ADMITTED KAMAL AL ASSAD HAS VERY LITTLE RELIABLE SUPPORT IN THE SOUTH. THE ISRAELIS WERE CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH, BUT THE FIGHTING HAD SUBSIDED INTO A STATUS QUO SITUATION. THE CHRISTIAN VILLAGES WERE TOO STRONG TO BE TAKEN BY THE PALESTINIAN/MOSLEM LEFTISTS. THE CHRISTIAN FORCES HAVE 500 SOLDIERS PRINCIPALLY IN QULAYAH AND MARJAYUN, ALONG WITH 100 SHIA, 300 MILITIA AND AN ADDITIONAL 400 MEN WHO HAVE RECENTLY BEEN TRAINED IN ISRAEL. MILITARY SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN DWINDLING AND HE JOKINGLY MENTIONED THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO BEGIN RELOADING THEIR OWN ARTILLERY SHELLS IN QULAYAH. HE REMARKED THAT THE LONGER THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DELAYED IN PUTTING A GOVERNMENT FORCE IN THE SOUTH, THE MORE HEAVILY THE CHRISTIANS WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON ISRAEL. HE CLAIMED THAT THE CHRISTIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH AND THE KFUR FRONT HAD EXPECTED THE SYRIANS TO LET THEM OPEN A ROUTE BETWEEN THE SOUTH AND JEZZIN THREE MONTHS AGO, BUT THIS HOPE VANISHED WHEN THE SYRIANS WERE FORCED TO WITHDRAW FROM NABATIYAH.

C. DANY SAID RECENT FIGHTING HAD SHOWN IMPOSSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANS WORKING WITH MOSLEMS. SHIA HAD TURNED AGAINST CHRISTIANS AT TAIBEH AND AL-KHIAM. THEY SIMPLY WERE NOT TO BE TRUSTED. HE WAS VERY CYNICAL AND PESSIMISTIC ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN COOPERATION IN GENERAL. HE THOUGHT DIALOGUE USELESS AND IT BETTER TO LET EACH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 01949 280803Z

SECT HAVE ITS OWN TURF. WHEN AMBASSADOR REMARKED THAT PERHAPS A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS WAS NEEDED, DANY SAID SONS WOULD BE NO DIFFERENT FROM FATHERS. THEY ALL THOUGHT ALIKE.

D. HAMAT AIRFIELD. THE AIRSTRIP ITSELF MAY BE COMPLETED IN JUNE, BUT IT WILL BE SOME TIME IN THE FALL BEFORE OPERATIONS MAY COMMENCE. NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDER WAY TO INAUGURATE IT WITH TWO CHARTERED LEAR JETS FROM THE JORDANIAN BASED "ARAB WINGS."

2. COMMENT: WHILE I FOUND DANY REFRESHINGLY DIRECT AND PERSONALLY CHARMING, I DID NOT DETECT IN HIM THAT MODERATION WHICH IMPRESSED ASST SECY ATHERTON. HE STRUCK ME AS THE HARDEST LINING OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS I HAVE MET TO DATE. PERHAPS IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIS ABRUPT WAY OF TELLING ME I WAS TALKING NONSENSE WHEN I SPOKE OF POSSIBILITIES OF ACCOMMODATION. HE MAY BE RIGHT.

PARKER

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